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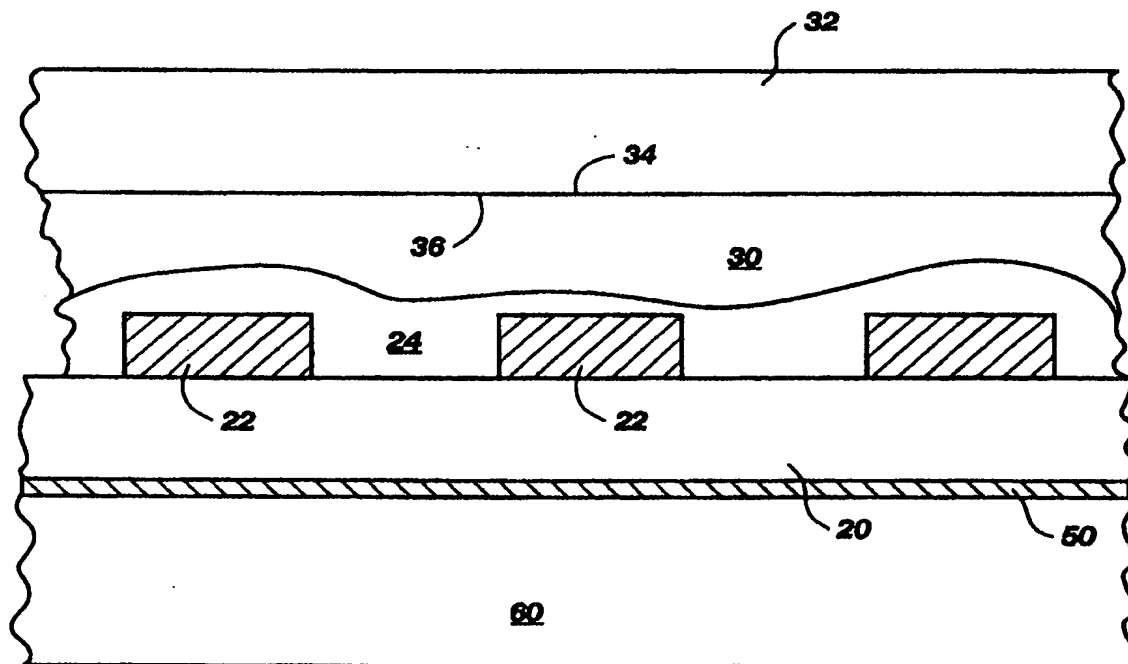
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(54) Title: PLANARIZATION PROCESS FOR SEMICONDUCTOR SUBSTRATES



(57) Abstract

A method of manufacturing semiconductor devices using an improved chemical mechanical planarization processes for the planarization of the surfaces (24) of the wafer (60) on which the semiconductor devices (22) are formed. The improved chemical mechanical planarization process includes the formation of a flat planar surface from a deformable coating (30) on the surface of the wafer filling in between the surface irregularities prior to the planarization of the surface through chemical mechanical planarization process.

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PLANARIZATION PROCESS FOR SEMICONDUCTOR SUBSTRATES**TECHNICAL FIELD**

The present invention relates to the manufacturing of semiconductor devices. More particularly, the present invention relates to an improved chemical mechanical planarization process for the planarization of surfaces in the manufacturing of semiconductor devices.

Background Art: Typically, integrated circuits are manufactured by the deposition of layers of predetermined materials to form the desired circuit components on a silicon wafer semiconductor substrate. As the layers are deposited on the substrate wafer to form the desired circuit component the planarity of each of the layers is an important consideration because the deposition of each layer produces a rough, or nonplanar, topography initially on the surface of the wafer substrate and, subsequently, on any previously deposited layer of material.

Typically, photolithographic processes are used to form the desired circuit components on the wafer substrate. When such photolithographic processes are pushed to their technological limits of circuit formation, the surface on which the processes are used must be as planar as possible to ensure success in circuit formation. This results from the requirement that the electromagnetic radiation used to create a mask, which is used in the formation of the circuits of the semiconductor devices in wafer form, must be accurately focused at a single level, resulting in the precise imaging over the entire surface of the wafer. If the wafer surface is not sufficiently planar, the resulting mask will be poorly defined causing, in turn, a poorly defined circuit which may malfunction. Since several different masks are used to form the different layers of circuits of the semiconductor devices on the substrate wafer, any non-planar areas of the wafer will be subsequently magnified in later deposited layers.

After layer formation on the wafer substrate, either a chemical etch-back process of planarization, or a global press planarization process typically followed by a chemical etch-back process of planarization, or chemical mechanical planarization process may be used to planarize the layers before the subsequent deposition of a layer of material thereover. In this manner, the surface

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irregularities of a layer may be minimized so that subsequent layers deposited thereon do not substantially reflect the irregularities of the underlying layer.

One type of chemical etch-back process of planarization, illustrated in EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION 0 683 511 A2, uses a coating technique in which an object having a flat surface is used to planarize a coating material applied to the wafer surface prior to a plasma reactive ion etching process being used to planarize the wafer surface. Often, however, the planarization surface will contain defects, such as pits or other surface irregularities. These may result from defects in the flat surface used for planarizing or from foreign material adhering to the flat surface. The etching of such a wafer surface having irregularities will, at best, translate those undesirable irregularities to the etched surface. Further, since some etching processes may not be fully anisotropic, etching such irregular surfaces may increase the size of the defects in the etched wafer surface.

One type of global press planarization process, illustrated in United States Patent 5,434,107, subjects a wafer with features formed thereon having been coated with an inter-level dielectric material to an elevated temperature while an elevated pressure is applied to the wafer using a press until the temperature and pressure conditions exceed the yield stress of the upper film on the wafer so that the film will attempt to be displaced into and fill both the microscopic and local depressions in the wafer surface. It should be noted that the film is only deformed locally on the wafer, not globally, during the application of elevated temperature and pressure since the object contacting the surface of the wafer will only contact the highest points or areas on the surface of the wafer to deform or displace such points or areas of material locally, not globally displace the material on the entire wafer surface. Other non-local depressions existing in the wafer are not affected by the pressing as sufficient material is not displaced thereinto. Subsequently, the temperature and pressure are reduced so that the film will become firm again thereby leaving localized areas having a partially planar upper surface on portions of the wafer while other portions of the wafer surface will remain non-planar.

In one instance, global planar surfaces are created on a semiconductor wafer using a press located in a chamber. Referring to drawing Fig. 1, a global planarization apparatus 100 is illustrated. The global planarization apparatus 100 serves to press the surface of a semiconductor wafer 120 having multiple layers

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including a deformable outermost layer 122 against a fixed pressing surface 132. the surface of the deformable layer 122 will assume the shape and surface characteristics of the pressing surface 132 under the application of force to the wafer 120. The global planarization apparatus 100 includes a fully enclosed
5 apparatus having a hollow cylindrical chamber body 112 and having open top and bottom ends, 113 and 114 respectively, and interior surface 116 and an evacuation port 111. A base plate 118 having an inner surface 117 is attached to the bottom end 114 of chamber body 112 by bolts 194. A press plate 130 is removably
10 mounted to the top end 113 of chamber body 112 with pressing surface 132 facing base plate 118. The interior surface 116 of chamber body 112, the pressing surface 132 of press plate 130 and the inner surface 117 of base plate 118 define a sealable chamber. Evacuation port 111 can be positioned through any surface, such as through base plate 118, and not solely through chamber body 112.

The press plate 130 has a pressing surface 132 with dimensions greater than
15 that of wafer 120 and being thick enough to withstand applied pressure. Press plate 130 is formed from non-adhering material capable of being highly polished so that pressing surface 132 will impart the desired smooth and flat surface quality to the surface of the deformable layer 122 on wafer 120. Preferably, the press plate is a disc shaped quartz optical flat.

20 A rigid plate 150 having top and bottom surfaces 152 and 154, respectively, and lift pin penetrations 156 therethrough is disposed within chamber body 112 with the top surface 152 substantially parallel to and facing the pressing surface 132. The rigid plate 150 is constructed of rigid material to transfer a load under an applied force with minimal deformation.

25 A uniform force is applied to the bottom surface 154 of rigid plate 150 through the use of a bellows arrangement 140 and relatively pressurized gas to drive rigid plate 150 toward pressing surface 132. Relative pressure can be achieved by supplying gas under pressure or, if the chamber body 112 is under vacuum, allowing atmospheric pressure into bellows 140 to drive the same. The bellows 140
30 is attached at one end to the bottom surface 154 of rigid plate 150 and to the inner surface 117 of base plate 118 with a bolted mounting plate 115 to form a pressure containment that is relatively pressurized through port 119 in base plate 118. One or more brackets 142 are mounted to the inner surface 117 of the base plate 118 to

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limit the motion toward base plate 118 of the rigid plate 118 to limit the motion toward base plate 118 of the rigid plate 150, when bellows 140 is not relatively pressurized. The application of force through the use of a relatively pressurized gas ensures the uniform application of force to the bottom surface 154 of rigid plate 150. The use of rigid plate 150 will serve to propagate the uniform pressure field with minimal distortion. Alternately, the bellows 140 can be replaced by any suitable means for delivering a uniform force, such as a hydraulic means.

A flexible pressing member 160 is provided having upper and lower surfaces 162 and 164, respectively, which are substantially parallel to the top surface 152 of rigid plate 150 and pressing surface 132. Lift pin penetrations 166 are provided through member 165. The flexible member 160 is positioned with its bottom surface 164 in contact with the top surface 152 of rigid plate 150 and lift pin penetrations 66 aligned with lift penetrations 156 in rigid plate 150. The upper surface 162 of the member 160 is formed from a material having a low viscosity that will deform under an applied force to close lift pin penetrations 166 and uniformly distribute the applied force to the wafer, even when the top surface 152, the upper surface 162 and/or the lower surface 164 is not completely parallel to the pressing surface 132 or when thickness variations exist in the wafer 120, rigid plate 150 or member 160, as well as any other source of non-uniform applied force.

Lift pins 170 are slidably disposable through lift pin penetrations, 156 and 166, respectively, in the form of apertures, to contact the bottom surface 126 of wafer 120 for lifting the wafer 120 off the top surface 162 of member 160. Movement of the lift pins 170 is controlled by lift pin drive assembly 172, which is mounted on the inner surface 117 of the base plate 118. The lift pin drive assembly provides control of the lift pins 170 through conventional means. Lift pins 170 and lift pin drive assembly 172 are preferably positioned outside the pressure boundary defined by the bellows 140 to minimize the number of pressure boundary penetrations. However, they can be located within the pressure boundary, if desired, in a suitable manner.

A multi-piece assembly consisting of lower lid 180, middle lid 182, top lid 184, gasket 186 and top clamp ring 188 are used to secure the press plated 130 to the top end 113 of chamber body 112. The ring-shaped lower lid 180 is mounted to the top end 113 of chamber body 112 and has a portion with an inner ring

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dimension smaller than press plate 130 so that press plate 130 is seated on lower lid 180. Middle lid 82 and top lid 84 are ring-shaped members having an inner ring dimension greater than press plate 130 and are disposed around press plate 130. Middle lid 182 is located between lower lid 180 and top lid 184. A gasket 186 and top clamp ring 188 are members having an inner ring dimension less than that of press plate 130 and are seated on the surface of press plate 130 external to the chamber. Bolts 194 secured press plate 130 to the chamber body 112.

Heating elements 190 and thermocouples 192 control the temperature of the member 160.

In operation, the top clamping ring 188, gasket 186, upper lid 84, and middle lid 82 are removed from the body 112 and the press plate 130 is lifted from lower lid 180. The bellows 140 is deflated and rigid plate 150 is seated on stand off brackets 142. The wafer 120 is placed on the flexible member 160 with the side of the wafer 120 opposite the deformable layer 122 in contact with flexible member 160. The press plate 30 is mounted on the lower lid 80 and the middle lid 182, upper lid 184 are installed and tightened using gasket 186 and top clamp ring 188 sealing press plate 130 between top clamp 188 and lower lid 180. The temperature of member 160, press plate 130, and rigid plate 150 are adjusted through the use of heating elements 190 monitored by thermocouples 192 to vary the deformation characteristics of the layer 122 of wafer 120. Chamber body 112 is evacuated through port 119 to a desired pressure.

A pressure differential is established between the interior and exterior of the bellows 140, whether by pressurizing or by venting when the chamber body 112 having been evacuated thereby drives rigid plate 150, member 160, and wafer 120 toward press plate 130 and brings deformable layer 122 of wafer 120 into engagement with press surface 132 of press plate 130. Upon engagement of wafer 120 with press plate 130, the continued application of force will deform the flexible member 160 which, in turn, serves to close lift penetrations 166 and distribute the force to ensure the wafer 120 experiences uniform pressure on its surface 122. After the wafer 120 has been in engagement with pressing surface 132 for sufficient time to cause its surface 122 to globally correspond to the pressing surface 132, the surface 122 is hardened or cured. The pressure is released from the bellows 140 thereby retracting wafer 120, member 160, and rigid plate 150 from the press plate

130. The downward movement of rigid plate 150 will be terminated by its engagement with stand off offset brackets 142.

Once the rigid plate 150 is fully retracted, the vacuum is released in chamber body 112. Lift pins 170 are moved through lift penetrations 156 in the rigid plate 150 and lift penetrations 166 in the member 160 to lift wafer 120 off the member 160. The top clamping ring 188, gasket 186, upper lid 184, middle lid 182, and press plate 130 are removed and the wafer 120 is removed off lift pins 170 for further processing.

Once the wafer is removed, it will be subjected to an etch to establish the planar surface at the desired depth. A system used or depicted in Fig. 1 provides an optimal method of deforming a flowable, curable material to form a generally planarized surface. However, the method is still subject to yielding a wafer surface with irregularities therein, and the need for the subsequent etch to define the desired surface height will still result in undesirable transfer and possible enlargement of any such surface irregularities.

Conventional chemical mechanical planarization processes are used to planarize layers formed on wafer substrates in the manufacture of integrated circuit semiconductor devices. Typically, a chemical mechanical planarization (CMP) process planarizes a non-planar irregular surface of a wafer by pressing the wafer against a moving polishing surface that is wetted with a chemically reactive, abrasive slurry. The slurry is usually either basic or acidic and generally contains alumina or silica abrasive particles. The polishing surface is usually a planar pad made of a relatively soft, porous material, such as a blown polyurethane, mounted on a planar platen.

Referring to drawing Fig. 2, a conventional chemical mechanical planarization apparatus is schematically illustrated. A semiconductor wafer 112 is held by a wafer carrier 111. A soft, resilient pad 113 is positioned between the wafer carrier 111 and the wafer 112. The wafer 112 is held against the pad 113 by a partial vacuum. The wafer carrier 111 is continuously rotated by a drive motor 114 and is also designed for transverse movement as indicated by the arrows 115. The rotational and transverse movement is intended to reduce variability in material removal rates over the surface of the wafer 112. The apparatus further comprises a rotating platen 116 on which is mounted a polishing pad 117. The platen 116 is

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relatively large in comparison to the wafer 112, so that during the chemical mechanical planarization process, the wafer 112 may be moved across the surface of the polishing pad 117 by the wafer carrier 111. A polishing slurry containing a chemically reactive solution, in which abrasive particles are suspended, is delivered
5 through a supply tube 118 onto the surface of the polishing pad 117.

Referring to drawing Fig. 3 a typical polishing table is illustrated in top view. The surface of the polishing table 1 is precision machined to be flat and may have a polishing pad affixed thereto. The surface of the table rotates the polishing pad past one or more wafers 3 to be polished. The wafer 3 is held by a wafer
10 holder, as illustrated hereinbefore, which exerts vertical pressure on the wafer against the polishing pad. The wafer holder may also rotate and/or orbit the wafer on the table during wafer polishing.

Alternately, the table 1 may be stationary and serve as a supporting surface for individual polishing platens 2, each having their own individual polishing pad.
15 As illustrated in United States Patent 5,232,875, each platen may have its own mechanism for rotating or orbiting the platen 2. A wafer holder will bring a wafer in contact with the platen 2 and an internal or external mechanism to the wafer holder may be used to also rotate the wafer during the polishing operation. In a polishing table having multiple individual platens, each platen must be precision
20 machined.

The wafers 3 are typically stored and transported in wafer cassettes which hold multiple wafers. The wafers 3 or wafer holders are transported between the wafer cassettes and the polishing table 1 using the wafer transport arm 4. The wafer transport arm 4 will transport the wafers 3 between the polishing table and
25 the stations 5, which may be wafer cassette stations or wafer monitoring stations.

The polishing characteristics of the polishing pad will change during use as multiple wafers 3 are polished. The glazing or changing of the polishing characteristics will effect the planarization of the surface of the wafers 3, if the pads are not periodically conditioned and unglazed. The pad conditioner 6 is used to
30 periodically unglaze the surface of the polishing pad. The pad conditioner 6 has a range of motion which allows it to come in contact with the individual pads and conduct the period unglazing and then to move to its rest position.

The pressure between the surface of the wafer to be polished and the moving polishing pad may be generated by either the force of gravity acting on the wafer and the wafer carrier or by mechanical force applied normal to the wafer surface. The slurry may be delivered or injected through the polishing pad onto its surface.

- 5 The planar platens may be moved in a plane parallel to the pad surface with either an orbital, fixed-direction vibratory, or random direction vibratory motion.

While a chemical mechanical planarization process is an effective process to planarize the surface of a wafer, variations in height on the surface to be planarized by the chemical mechanical planarization process, although minimized through the
10 chemical mechanical planarization process, will often not be completely removed to yield an optimally planar surface. As is well known in the art, the chemical mechanical planarization process polishing pad will deform, or "dish", into recesses between structures of the surface of the wafer. The structure spacing on the wafer which will yield this "dishing" is clearly a function of various factors, such as the
15 pad composition, the polishing pressure, etc. This pad "dishing" will clearly lead to less than optimal planarization of the surface of the wafer. Further, the surface irregularities extending into or down to the wafer surface being planarized tend to collect slurry thereby causing such areas of the wafer to be subjected to the corrosive effects of the slurry longer than other areas of the wafer surface which do
20 not collect the slurry.

To help minimize polishing pad deformation (dishing) caused by surface irregularities formed by the integrated circuit components on the wafer surface, dummy structures have also been included on the wafer surface in an attempt to provide a more uniform spacing of structures on the wafer surface. While the use
25 of such dummy structures will often be useful, the ultimate result is also highly dependent upon the later chemical mechanical planarization process conditions.

Therefore, a need exists to reduce the surface irregularities on a wafer before the chemical mechanical planarization process to facilitate planarization of the wafer surface irregularities by such process and to facilitate planarization which
30 provides greater latitude in the chemical mechanical planarization process parameters.

DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to an improved chemical mechanical planarization process for the planarization of surfaces in the manufacturing of semiconductor devices. The improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention includes the formation of a flat planar surface from a deformable planar coating on the surface of the wafer filling the areas between the surface irregularities prior to the planarization of the surface through a chemical mechanical planarization process.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a side view of a global planarization apparatus;

Fig. 2 is an illustration of a conventional rotational chemical mechanical planarization apparatus;

Fig. 3 is an illustration of a top view of a polishing table of a conventional rotational chemical mechanical planarization apparatus;

Fig. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of a wafer substrate having electrical circuit components formed thereon on a coating thereover;

Fig. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of a wafer substrate having electrical circuit components formed thereon, a coating thereover, a deformable coating, and a portion of a flat pressing member used in the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of a wafer substrate having electrical circuit components formed thereon, a coating thereover, and a deformable coating after the deformation thereof using a flat pressing member in the process of the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of a wafer substrate having electrical circuit components formed thereon and a coating material between the electrical circuit components after the chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention of the configuration of the present invention illustrated in drawing Fig. 6;

Fig. 8 is a cross-sectional view of a portion of a wafer substrate, a resilient member located below the wafer substrate, a support member located below the wafer substrate, electrical circuit components formed on the wafer substrate, a coating located over the electrical circuits, and a deformable coating located over

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the coating formed over the electrical circuits after the deformation thereof using a flat pressing member in the process of the present invention;

5 Figs. 9A and 9B are a process flow description of the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention as illustrated in Fig. 7; and

Figs. 10A and 10B are a process flow description of the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the alternative embodiment of the present invention illustrated in drawing Fig. 8.

10 BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

Referring to drawing Fig. 4, a portion of a wafer substrate 20 is illustrated having portions of electrical circuit components 22 formed thereon and a coating of material 24, typically a metallic material, a semiconductor material, or an insulating material 24, covering the electrical circuit components 22 and portions of the wafer
15 substrate 20 located between the electrical circuit components 22. As illustrated, the portions of the electrical circuit components 22 are formed having upper surfaces 26 thereon while the coating of insulating material 24 is formed having an irregular nonplanar surface 28 extending over the surfaces 26 of the electrical circuit components 22. The insulating coating 24 typically comprises an insulating
20 oxide or other dielectric material and may include a plurality of layers of such insulating or other types of material, as desired. In this instance, for convenience, the insulating material 24 is illustrated covering the wafer substrate 20 and the electrical circuit components 22 thereon regardless of the number of layers thereof.

It can be easily seen that if only portions of the of the surface 28 of
25 insulating material 24 is removed for the formation of additional electrical circuit components, the nonplanar surface of the insulating material 24 would cause masking and etching problems as the masking of the insulating material 24 would not be uniform as well as the etching thereof would not be uniform. Therefore, the surface 28 must be globally planarized to facilitate further electrical circuit
30 component formation.

At this juncture, if a conventional chemical mechanical planarization process is used on the wafer substrate 20, the surface of the wafer will be subject to a reactive slurry and one or more polishing pads used in the process in an attempt to

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form a planar surface on the insulating material 24 covering the electrical circuit components 22. Some of the problems associated with such a conventional chemical mechanical planarization process are that the reactive slurry is unevenly distributed about the wafer substrate 20 and the pad used in the process, that

5 particulates removed from the substrate 20 and insulating material 24 during the polishing process may become lodged in the polishing pad forming a glaze thereon thereby affecting the rate of removal by the pad and causing the polishing pad to unevenly remove material during the process, and that as the chemical mechanical planarization process begins by polishing an irregular surface on the wafer such

10 surface causes the deformation of the polishing pad (dishing) thereby further inducing irregularities not initially present in the surface being polished. The induced irregularities of the surface of the wafer during the chemical mechanical planarization of the wafer surface being caused by the dishing of the polishing pad from the force applied thereto and the deformation of the pad by surface areas of

15 the wafer. Therefore, before starting the chemical mechanical planarization process of the surface of a wafer, it is desirable to have the surface to be planarized as nearly planar as possible to help ensure the even removal of material therefrom and to help eliminate the deformation of the polishing pad(s) being used to thereby, in turn, help minimize any surface irregularities being introduced into the surface

20 being planarized by such pad deformation.

Referring to drawing Fig. 5, the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of present invention is illustrated in relation to a wafer substrate 20 having electrical circuit components 22 thereon and a coating of insulating material 24 thereover. In the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the

25 present invention, prior to the initiation of the chemical mechanical planarization of the substrate 20, electrical circuit components 22 and insulating material 24, a layer of deformable material 30 is coated or deposited over the insulating material 24. The deformable material 30 may be of any suitable type material that readily flows over the surface 28 of the insulating material 24 and that is subsequently solidified

30 through curing or hardening or other type of solidification. Alternately, the deformable material 30, in some instances, may be a readily deformable metal capable of being deformed under low temperature and low pressure which may be readily deposited over the coating 24 through well known techniques and processes.

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Whatever the type of deformable material 30, the deformable material 30 is applied over the insulating material 24 to any desired depth but is typically applied in a thickness greater than the thickness of the surface topography of the wafer. The thickness of the deformable material 30 initially applied to the wafer depending upon the type of material selected for such use, the dimensions of the surface irregularities, etc. After the application of the layer of deformable material 30 to the insulating material 24 and before the material 30 has cured, hardened, or solidified to the point which it is not capable of being deformed, an object 32 having a flat planar surface 34 thereon is forced under pressure into the deformable material 30 to form a flat, planar surface 36 thereon and is kept in contact with the deformable material 30 while the deformable material 30 cures, hardens, or solidifies. The object 32 may be of any well known suitable material, such as an optical quartz glass disc shaped object, having a desired flat, planar ground surface thereon which may be used to be pressed into the deformable material 30 to form a flat, planar surface 36 thereon. If desired, the object 32 may be tailored to meet process requirements of the desired range of pressure to be applied to the deformable material 30 and the method of curing, hardening or solidifying the material 30. Further, if desired, the surface 34 on the object 32 may have a shape other than a flat, planar surface 34, such as either a concave surface, convex surface, concave and convex surface, or any type desired surface suitable in a chemical mechanical planarization process. Additionally, the surface 34 of the object 32 may be coated with a suitable release agent coating to facilitate its removal from the deformable coating material 30 after the curing, hardening or solidification thereof.

The deformable material 30 may be any suitable well known organic type, such as monomers, monomer mixtures, oligomers, and oligomer mixtures that are solidified through curing. Alternately, the deformable material 30 may be any suitable type epoxy resin which may be cured using an acid catalyst.

The object 32 is kept through the application of suitable pressure thereto, or application of pressure to the wafer substrate 20, or the application of pressure to both the object 32 and the wafer substrate 20 in engagement with the deformable material 30 until such material has hardened or solidified to form a permanent flat, planar surface 36 thereon being the mirror image of the flat, planar surface 34 on

the object 32. At such time, the object 32 is removed from engagement with the deformable material 30.

Referring to drawing Fig. 6, before the chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention commenced the wafer substrate 20 having electrical circuit components 22 and insulative coating 24 thereon is illustrated having the deformable material 30 having a flat, planar surface 36 thereon providing a global flat, planar surface 36 on the wafer substrate. As illustrated, the global surface 36 on the deformable material 30 is a flat, planar surface from which the chemical mechanical planarization process is to begin on the wafer substrate 20. In this manner, a conventional well known chemical mechanical planarization process as described hereinbefore can be used to form flat planar surfaces on the insulating material 24. By starting with a globally flat, planar surface 36 on the deformable material 30 any deformation of the pad 117 (Fig. 2) is minimized. Also, any non-uniform planarization which may occur due to the uneven distribution of the chemical reactive solution and abrasives included therein or material particles from the surfaces being planarized being collected or present in the pad 117 resulting from surface irregularities is minimized. In this manner, by starting the chemical mechanical planarization process from a globally flat, planar surface 36 of the deformable material 30 as the chemical mechanical planarization process is carried out the surfaces of the layers being planarized remain flat and planar because the pad 117 is subjected to more uniform loading and operation during the process. This is in clear contrast to the use of a chemical mechanical planarization process beginning from an irregular nonplanar surface as is typically carried out in the prior art.

Referring to drawing Fig. 7, illustrated is a wafer substrate 20, electrical circuit components 22 and insulating layer 24 which have been planarized using the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention. As illustrated, a flat, planar surface 40 has been formed through the use of the chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention as described hereinbefore with the surface 40 including flat planar surface 28' of the insulating material 24.

Referring to drawing Fig. 8, and alternate apparatus and method of the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention is illustrated. The present invention is illustrated in relation to a wafer substrate 20

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having electrical circuit components 22 thereon and a coating of insulating material 24 thereover. In the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention, prior to the initiation of the chemical mechanical planarization of the wafer substrate 20, electrical circuit components 22 and insulating material 24, a
5 layer of deformable material 30 is coated or deposited over the insulating material 24. The deformable material 30 may be of any suitable type material which readily flows over the surface 28 of the insulating material 24 that is subsequently solidified through curing or hardening. The deformable material 30 is applied over the insulating material 24 to any desired depth but is typically applied in a thickness
10 greater than the surface typography of the wafer. The thickness of the deformable material 30 initially applied to the wafer depending upon the type of material selected for such use, the dimensions of the surface irregularities, etc.

After the application of the layer of deformable material 30 to the insulating material 24 and before the material 30 has cured, hardened, or solidified to the
15 point which it is not capable of being deformed, a flexible resilient member 50 is placed under the wafer substrate 20 between the wafer 20 and the substrate 60 on which the wafer 20 is supported and, an object 32 having a flat planar surface 34 thereon is forced under pressure into surface 36 of the deformable material 30 to form a globally flat, planar surface 36 thereon and is kept in contact with the
20 deformable material 30 while the deformable material 30 cures, hardens, or solidifies. As previously illustrated, the object 32 may be of any well known suitable material, such as an optical quartz glass disc shaped object having a flat, planar ground surface thereon which may be used to be pressed into the deformable material 30 to form a globally flat, planar surface 36 thereon. If desired, the object
25 32 may be tailored to meet process requirements of the desired range of pressure to be applied to the deformable material 30 and the method of curing, hardening or solidifying the material 30. Further, if desired, the surface 34 on the object 32 may have a shape other than a flat, planar surface 34, such as either a concave surface, convex surface, or any desired surface. Additionally, the surface 34 of the object
30 32 may be coated with a suitable release agent coating to facilitate its removal from the deformable coating material 30 after the curing, hardening or solidification thereof. The flexible resilient member 50 comprises a suitably shaped member compatible with the wafer substrate 20 formed of resilient material which will

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deform under an applied force to uniformly distribute the applied force from the object 32 to the deformable material 30, even if the surface 34 of object 32, surfaces 52 and 54 of the member 50 and the surface of the deformable material 30 on wafer substrate 20 are not substantially parallel to each other or, alternately, when thickness variations locally exist within either the wafer 20, electrical circuit components 22, insulative material 24, object 32, and/or flexible resilient member 50. It is preferred that the flexible resilient member 50 is thermally stable and resistant to the temperature ranges of operation experienced during the pressing by object 32 and that the member 50 be formed from a low viscosity and low durometer hardness material. In this manner, the flexible resilient member 50 serves to compensate for the variations in the thickness of the substrate 20, electrical circuit components 22, insulating material 24, deformable material 30, and object 32 as well as compensating for any non-parallel surfaces on the object 32 or the wafer 20 or the substrate 60 on which the wafer 20 is supported during the pressing of object 32 to form planar surface 36 on the deformable material 30 prior to the beginning of the chemical mechanical planarization process thereafter. The preferable manner in which the coating 24 on a wafer 20 is to be globally planarized to have a globally flat, planar surface 28 to begin the chemical mechanical planarization process is to use the global planarization apparatus 100 hereinbefore described with respect to drawing Fig. 1, or its equivalent.

Referring to drawing Figs. 9A and 9B, the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention as described hereinbefore is illustrated in a series of process steps 202 through 218.

In process step 202, a wafer substrate 20 is provided having electrical circuitry components 22 formed thereon and an insulating material coating 24 covering the components 22 and portions of the wafer substrate 20.

In process step 204, a coating of deformable material 30 which is uncured, unhardened, or not solidified at the time of application is applied to the coating of insulating material 24 to cover the same.

Next, in process step 206, an object 32 having a flat planar surface 34 thereon is provided for use.

In process step 208, the surface of deformable material is contacted by the flat, planar surface 34 of the object 32.

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In process step 210, a predetermined level of pressure is applied at a predetermined temperature level to the deformable material 30. The pressure may be applied to either the object 32, the substrate 20, or both, etc.

5 In process step 212, flat, planar surface 34 of object 32 forms a flat, planar surface 36 on the deformable material 30.

10 In process step 214, while the flat, planar surface 34 of the object 32 engages the deformable material 30 thereby forming the flat, planar surface 36 thereon, the deformable material 30 is cured, hardened, or solidified to cause the permanent formation and retention of the flat, planar surface 36 on the deformable material 30.

In process step 216, the object 32 is removed from engagement with the deformable material 30 after the curing, hardening or solidification thereof to retain the flat, planar surface 36 thereon.

15 In process step 218, the wafer substrate 20 having electrical circuit components 22, insulating coating 24, and cured, hardened, or solidified deformable coating 30 thereon is subjected to a suitable chemical mechanical planarization process until the upper surfaces 26' of the electrical circuit components and surface 28' of the insulating material 24 are a concurrent common flat, planar surface extending across the wafer substrate 20 (see Fig. 7).

20 Referring to drawing Figs. 10A and 10B, alternately, if the apparatus and method described with respect to drawing Fig. 8 are used, the process of such improved chemical mechanical planarization process being illustrated in process steps 302 through 320.

25 In process step 302, a wafer substrate 20 is provided having electrical circuitry components 22 formed thereon and an insulating material coating 24 covering the components 22 and portions of the wafer substrate 20.

In process step 304, a coating of deformable material 30 which is uncured, hardened, or solidified at the time of application is applied to the coating of insulating material 24 to cover the same.

30 Next, in process step 306, an object 32 having a flat planar surface 34 thereon is provided for use.

In process step 308, a flexible resilient member 50 is placed in contact with the bottom surface of the wafer 20.

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In process step 310, the surface 36 of the deformable material 30 is contacted with the surface 34 of the object 32.

In process step 312, flexible resilient member 50 remains contacting or engaging the bottom surface of the wafer 20.

5 In process step 314, a predetermined level of pressure is applied at a predetermined temperature level to the either the object 32, or the wafer substrate 20, or both thereby causing the flat, planar surface 34 of the object 32 to transmit force to the deformable material 30 thereby causing the surface 36 of the deformable material 30 to form a flat planar surface thereon substantially similar to
10 the flat planar surface 34 of the object 32.

In process step 316, while the flat, planar surface 34 of the object 32 engages the deformable material 30 thereby forming the flat, planar surface 36 thereon, the deformable material 30 is cured, hardened or solidified to cause the permanent formation and retention of the flat, planar surface 36 on the
15 deformable material 30.

In process step 318, the object 32 is removed from engagement with the deformable material 30 after the curing, hardening or solidification thereof to retain the flat, planar surface 36 thereon. If the flexible member 50 is used on the bottom of the wafer substrate 20, it may remain, or, if desired, a comparable flexible
20 member may be provided, during the chemical mechanical planarization process.

In process step 320, the wafer substrate 20 having electrical circuit components 22, insulating coating 24, and cured, hardened, or solidified deformable coating 30 thereon is subjected to a suitable chemical mechanical planarization process until the upper surfaces 26' of the electrical circuit components and surface
25 28' of the insulating material 24 are a concurrent common unbroken flat, planar surface 40 extending across the wafer substrate 20 (see Fig. 7). The preferable manner in which the coating 24 on a wafer 20 is to be globally planarized to have a globally flat, planar surface 28 to begin the chemical mechanical planarization process is to use the global planarization apparatus 100 hereinbefore described with
30 respect to drawing Fig. 1, or its equivalent.

In this manner, when the improved process of chemical mechanical planarization of the present invention is used, the resulting planarized surface on the wafer substrate is globally planar or more planar since the process started from a

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globally flat, planar surface and the chemical mechanical planarization process reaches a successful conclusion more quickly because the surface being planarized does not deform the polishing pad unnecessarily as the surface remains substantially planar throughout the process. This is in clear contrast to the prior art conventional chemical mechanical planarization process which begins from an irregular nonplanar surface thereby causing the deformation and deflection of the polishing pad thereby, in turn, causing an irregular nonplanar surface in the surface being planarized. Furthermore, the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention offers advantages over a globally planarized surface which is subsequently dry resistant etched-back. In globally planarized surfaces which are dry etched-back the dry etching process does not act uniformly on the materials being etched as they are subjected to the etching process at differing times and each material exhibits a differing etching rate thereby causing irregularities to be present in the resulting final surface at the end of the dry etching process. In contrast, the improved chemical mechanical planarization process begins from a globally flat planar surface, retains a globally flat, planar surface throughout the process, and results in a final globally flat planar surface at the end of the process.

It will be understood that changes, additions, modifications, and deletions may be made to the improved chemical mechanical planarization process of the present invention which are clearly within the scope of the claimed invention.

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CLAIMS**What is claimed is:**

1. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
 - 5 providing said wafer;
 - forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar film surface of said wafer; and
 - planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.
- 10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the substantially flat planar surface includes the step of:
 - coating said surface of said wafer with a deformable material.
- 15 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:
 - contacting the deformable material with an object.
- 20 4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
 - curing the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable material.
- 25 5. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
 - hardening the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable material.
- 30 6. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
 - solidifying the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable material.
7. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
 - applying pressure to the object contacting the deformable material while the object contacts the deformable material.

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8. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the coating of deformable material on the surface of the wafer
while the object contacts the deformable material.

5 9. The method of claim 3, wherein the object includes a substantially flat
planar surface thereon contacting the deformable material.

10 10. The method of claim 3, wherein the object includes a shaped surface
thereon contacting the deformable material.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the shaped surface includes a convex
surface portion.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the shaped surface includes a concave
15 surface portion.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein the shaped surface includes a convex
surface portion and a concave surface portion.

20 14. The method of claim 3, wherein the object includes a flat optical glass
object.

15. The method of claim 3, further including the step of:
coating the object with a release agent prior to contacting the deformable material.

25 16. The method of claim 3, wherein the object includes a substantially
inflexible object having a flat surface thereon.

17. The method of claim 2, further comprising the step of:
30 contacting the wafer with a resilient member.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the back of the wafer is contacted
with a resilient member.

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19. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the flexible resilient member to form a substantially flat planar
surface on the deformable material.

5 20. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
contacting the flexible resilient member with a substrate; and
applying pressure to the substrate thereby applying pressure to the flexible resilient
member.

10 21. The method of claim 19, further comprising the steps of:
applying pressure to the wafer through the flexible resilient member thereby
applying pressure to the object thereby deforming the coating of deformable
material on the wafer.

15 22. The method of claim 1, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having
electrical circuit components on a surface thereof.

20 23. The method of claim 1, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having a
plurality of electrical circuits on a surface thereof and a coating substantially
covering the electrical circuit components.

25 24. The method of claim 1, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having a
plurality of electrical components on a surface thereof and a coating substantially
covering the electrical components and said wafer.

25 25. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the object while the object is in contact with the deformable
material.

30 26. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
applying a substantially uniform pressure to the object while the object is in contact
with the deformable material.

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27. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
applying a substantially uniform pressure to the deformable material on the surface
of the wafer to form a substantially flat planar surface on the deformable
material.

5

28. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer having at
least one electrical circuit formed thereon, said method comprising the steps of:
providing said wafer:

forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar film surface of said
wafer; and

10

planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said wafer using a chemical
mechanical planarization process.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein forming the substantially flat planar
surface includes the step of:
coating said surface of said wafer with a deformable material.

15

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of:
contacting the deformable material with an object.

20

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
curing the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable
material.

32. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
hardening the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable
material.

25

33. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
solidifying the deformable material while the object is contacting the deformable
material.

30

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34. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the object contacting the deformable material while the object
contacts the deformable material.

5 35. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the coating of deformable material on the surface of the wafer
while the object contacts the deformable material.

36. The method of claim 30, wherein the object includes a substantially flat
10 planar surface thereon contacting the deformable material.

37. The method of claim 30, wherein the object includes a shaped surface
thereon contacting the deformable material.

15 38. The method of claim 37, wherein the shaped surface includes a convex
surface portion.

39. The method of claim 37, wherein the shaped surface includes a concave
surface portion.

20 40. The method of claim 37, wherein the shaped surface includes a convex
surface portion and a concave surface portion.

41. The method of claim 37, wherein the shaped surface includes a desired
25 shaped surface.

42. The method of claim 30, wherein the object includes a flat optical glass
object.

30 43. The method of claim 30, further including the step of:
coating the object with a release agent prior to contacting the deformable material.

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44. The method of claim 30, wherein the object includes a substantially inflexible object.

5 45. The method of claim 29, further comprising the step of:
contacting the wafer with a resilient member.

46. The method of claim 29, wherein the back of the wafer is contacted with a resilient member.

10 47. The method of claim 29, further comprising the steps of:
applying pressure to the flexible resilient member to form a substantially flat planar surface on the deformable material.

15 48. The method of claim 29, further comprising the steps of:
contacting the flexible resilient member with a substrate; and
applying pressure to the substrate thereby applying pressure to the flexible resilient member.

20 49. The method of claim 45, further comprising the steps of:
applying pressure to the wafer by applying pressure to the flexible resilient member thereby applying pressure to the object.

25 50. The method of claim 28, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having a plurality of electrical circuit components on a surface thereof.

51. The method of claim 28, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having a plurality of electrical components on a surface thereof and a coating substantially covering the electrical components.

30 52. The method of claim 28, wherein said wafer includes a wafer having a plurality of electrical circuits on a surface thereof and a coating substantially covering the electrical circuits and said wafer.

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53. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
applying pressure to the object while the object is in contact with the deformable material.

5 54. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
applying a substantially uniform pressure to the object while the object is in contact with the deformable material.

55. The method of claim 30, further comprising the step of:
10 applying a substantially uniform pressure to the deformable material on the surface of the wafer to form a substantially flat planar surface on the deformable material.

56. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer, said
15 method comprising the steps of:
providing said wafer;
applying a deformable material to said non-planar film surface of said wafer;
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material applied to
said non-planar film surface of said wafer; and
20 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

57. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer, said
method comprising the steps of:
providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
25 providing said wafer;
applying a deformable material to said non-planar film surface of said wafer;
contacting the deformable material with the object;
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
planar film surface of said wafer; and
30 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

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58. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- providing said wafer;
 - providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
 - 5 providing a flexible resilient member at the back of the wafer;
 - applying a deformable material to said non-planar film surface of said wafer;
 - contacting the deformable material;
 - forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
 - planar film surface of said wafer; and
 - 10 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

59. The method of claim 58, wherein the deformable material is contacted by an object.

- 15 60. A method for planarizing a non-planar film surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- providing said wafer;
 - providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
 - providing a flexible resilient member;
 - 20 applying a deformable material to said non-planar film surface of said wafer;
 - contacting the back of the wafer with the flexible resilient member;
 - applying pressure to the deformable material;
 - forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
 - planar film surface of said wafer; and
 - 25 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

61. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- providing said wafer;
 - 30 forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer;
 - and
 - planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

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62. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer having at least one electrical circuit formed thereon, said method comprising the steps of:

providing said wafer;

forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer;

5 and

planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

63. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method
10 comprising the steps of:

providing said wafer;

applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;

forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material applied to
said non-planar surface of said wafer; and

15 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

64. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method
comprising the steps of:

providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;

20 providing said wafer;

applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;

contacting the deformable material with the object;

forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
planar surface of said wafer; and

25 planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

65. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method
comprising the steps of:

providing said wafer;

30 providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;

providing a flexible resilient member at the back of the wafer;

applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;

contacting the deformable material;

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forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-planar surface of said wafer; and
planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

5 66. The method of claim 65, wherein the deformable material is contacted by an object.

67. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:

10 providing said wafer;
providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
providing a flexible resilient member;
applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;
contacting the back of the wafer with the flexible resilient member;
15 applying pressure to the deformable material;
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-planar surface of said wafer; and
planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

20 68. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
providing said wafer;
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer;
and
25 planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

69. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer having at least one electrical circuit formed thereon, said method comprising the steps of:
30 providing said wafer:
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer;
and

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planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

70. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- 5 providing said wafer;
 - applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;
 - forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material applied to said non-planar surface of said wafer; and
 - 10 planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said non-planar surface of said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

71. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- 15 providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
 - providing said wafer;
 - applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;
 - contacting the deformable material with the object;
 - forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
 - 20 planar surface of said wafer; and
 - planarizing said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

72. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:
- 25 providing said wafer;
 - providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
 - providing a flexible resilient member at the back of the wafer;
 - applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;
 - contacting the deformable material;
 - 30 forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-
 - planar surface of said wafer; and

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planarizing said substantially flat planar source on said deformable material on said non-planar surface of said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization process.

5 73. The method of claim 65, wherein the deformable material is contacted by an object.

74. A method for planarizing a non-planar surface of a wafer, said method comprising the steps of:

10 providing said wafer;
providing an object having a flat planar surface thereon;
providing a flexible resilient member;
applying a deformable material to said non-planar surface of said wafer;
contacting the back of the wafer with the flexible resilient member;
15 applying pressure to the deformable material;
forming a substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-planar surface of said wafer; and
planarizing said substantially flat planar surface on said deformable material on said non-planar surface of said wafer using a chemical mechanical planarization
20 process.

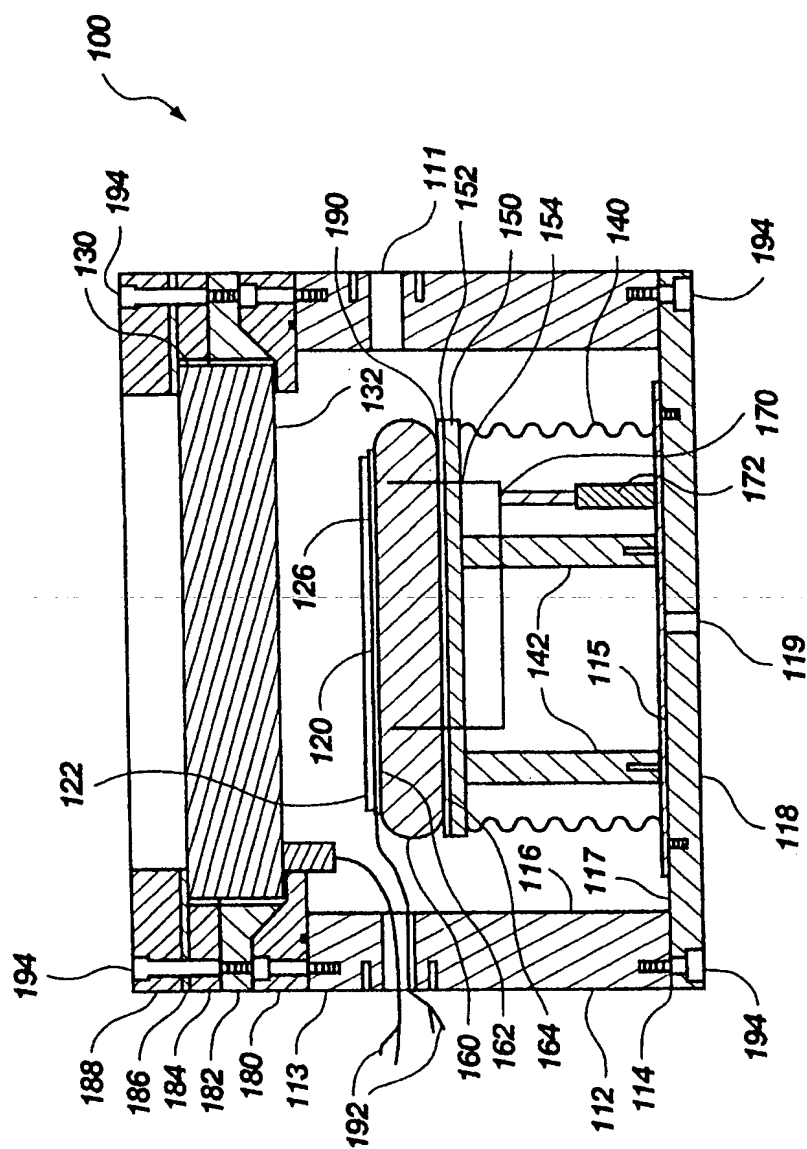


Fig. 1
(PRIOR ART)

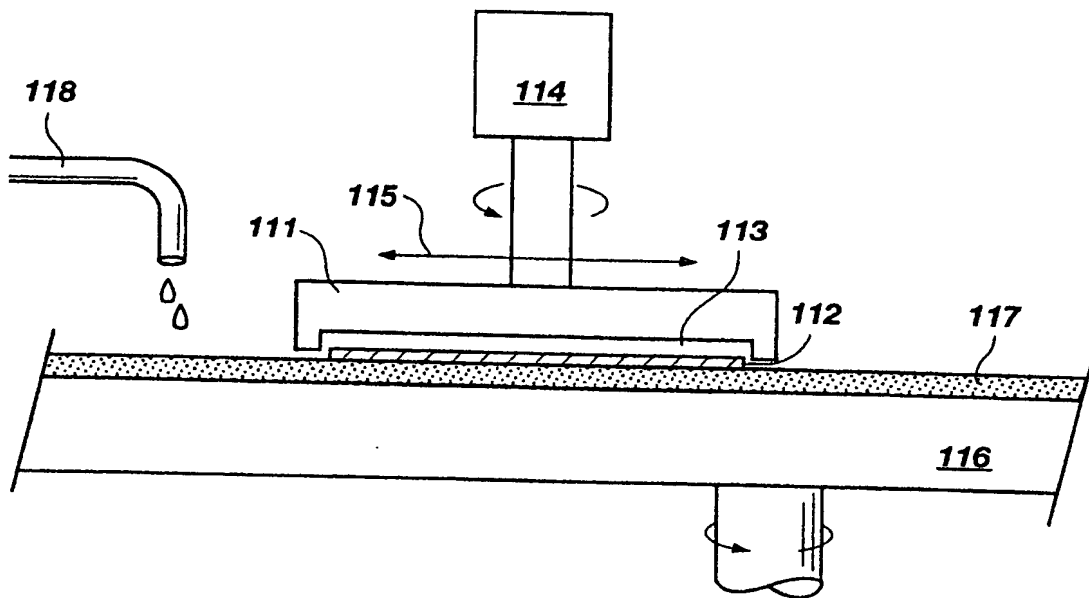


Fig. 2
(PRIOR ART)

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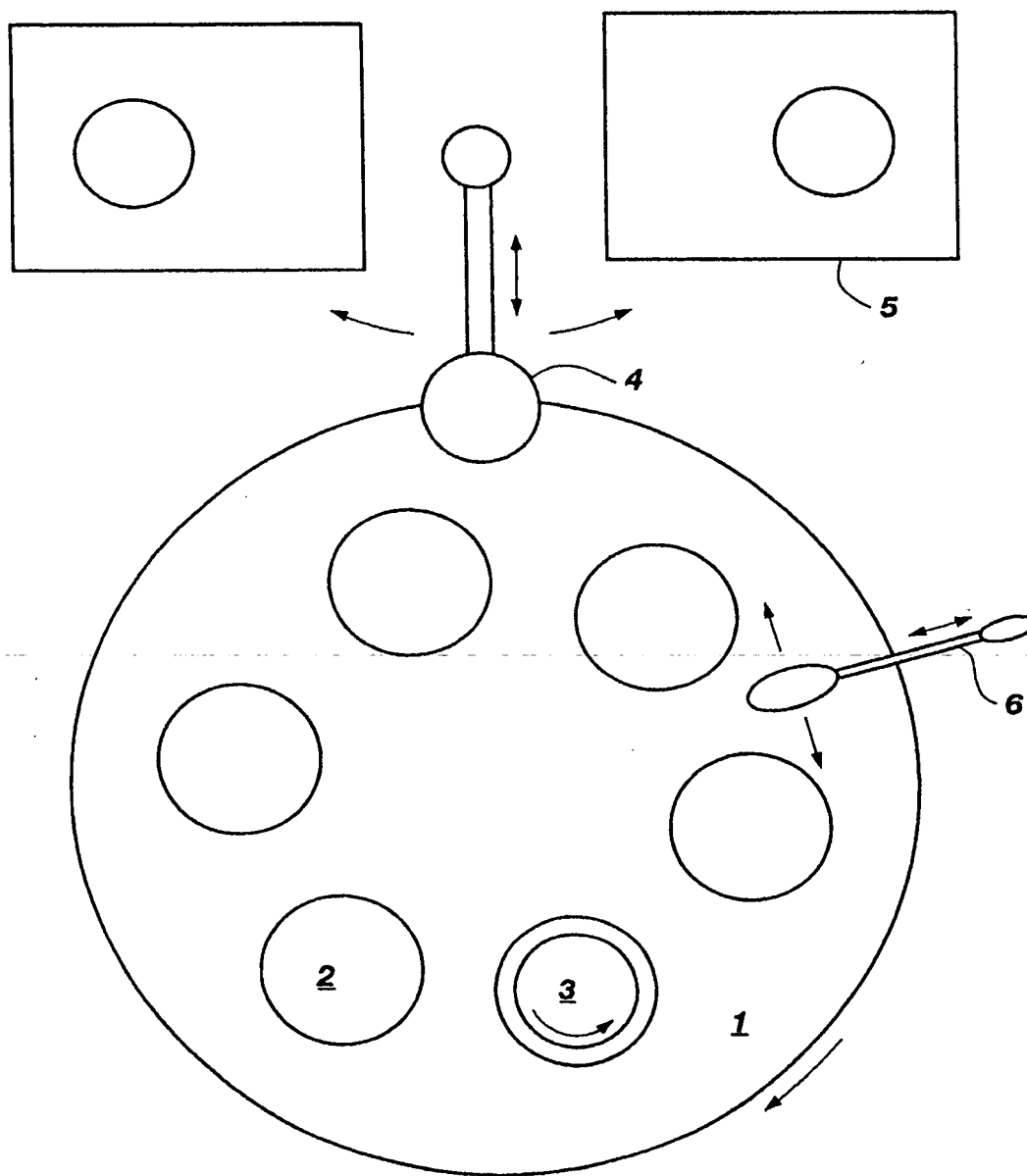


Fig. 3
(PRIOR ART)

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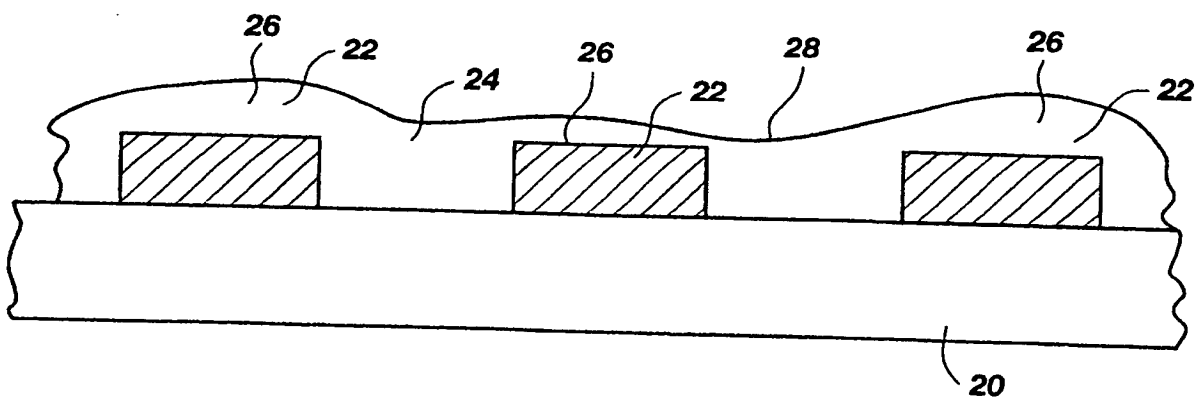


Fig. 4

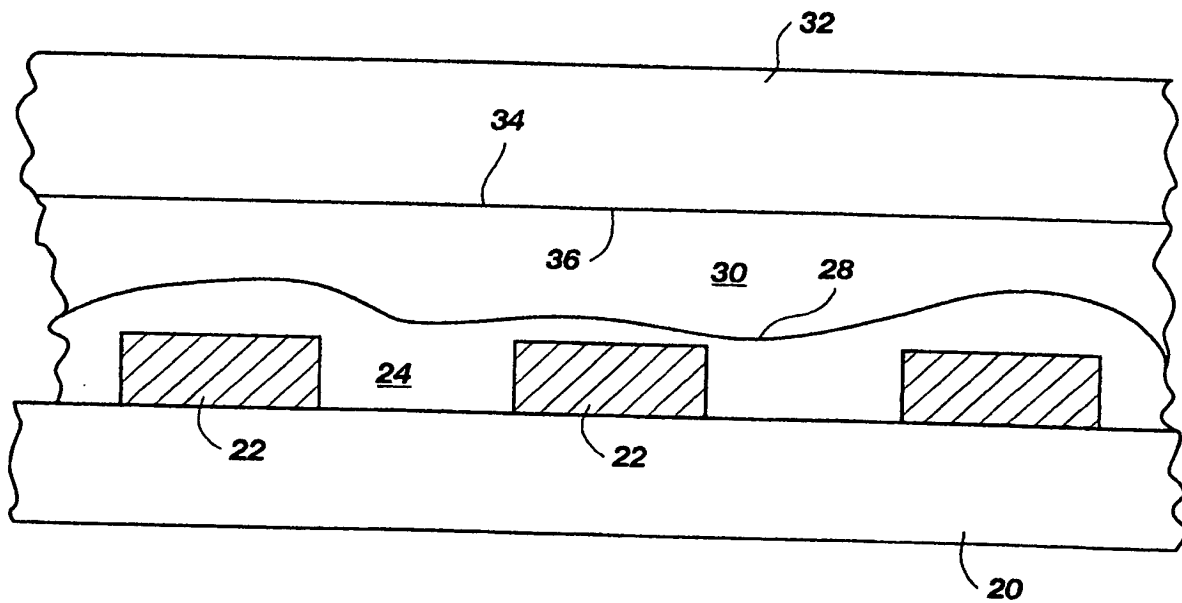


Fig. 5

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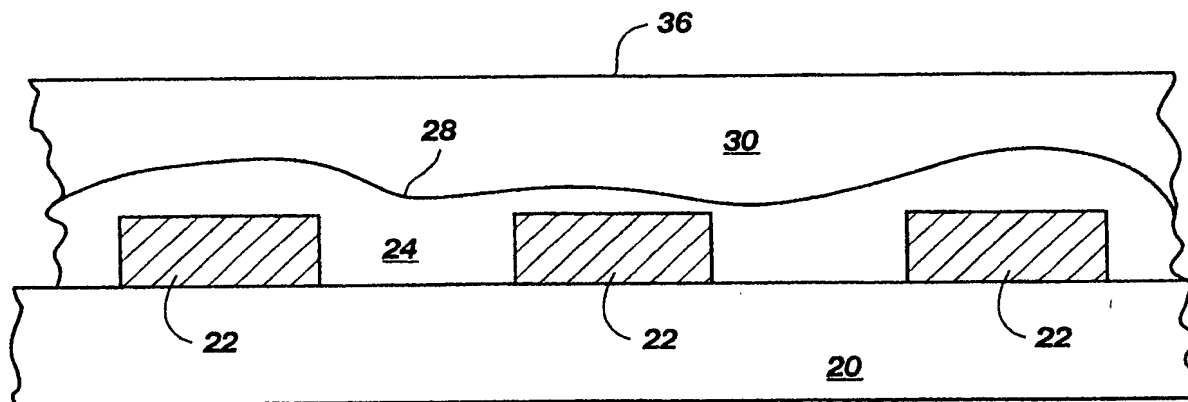


Fig. 6

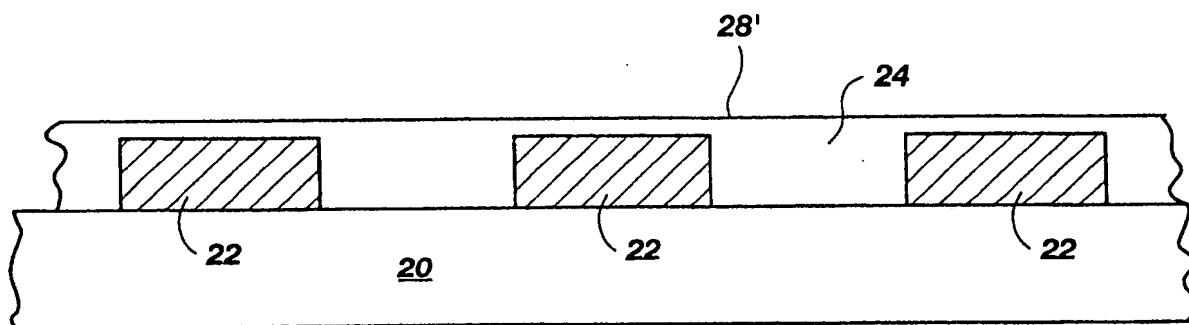
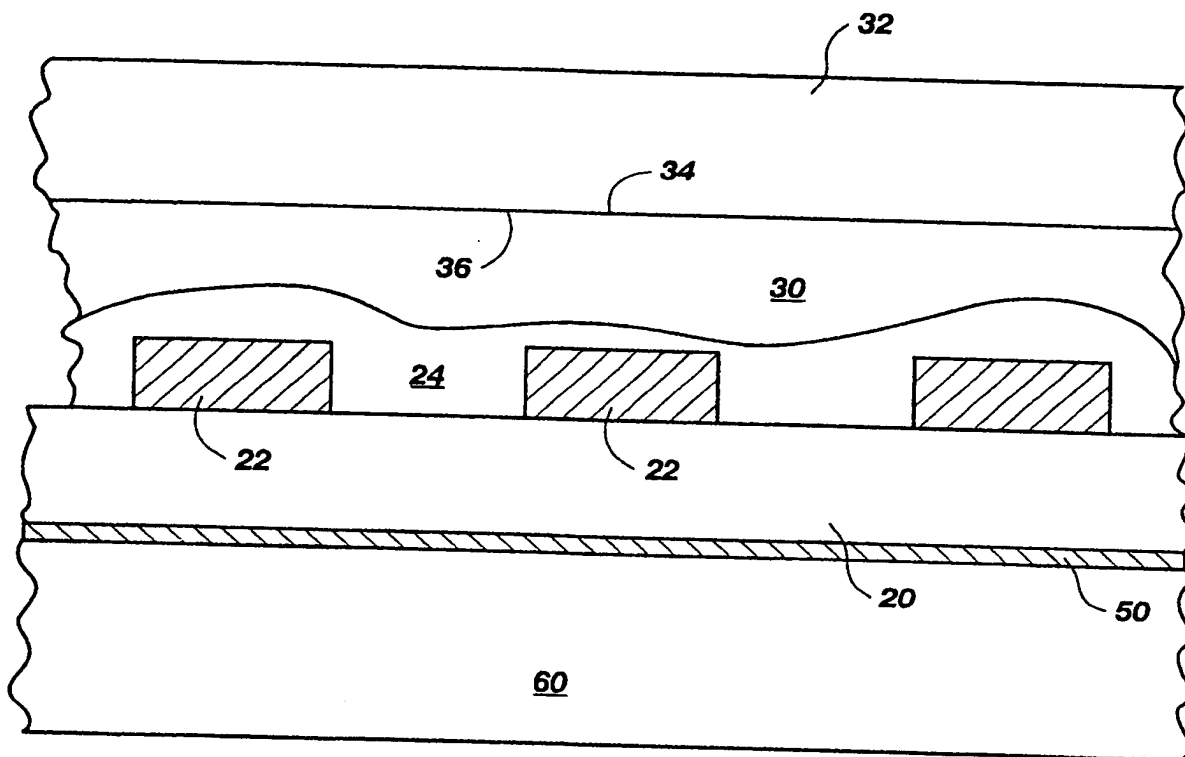
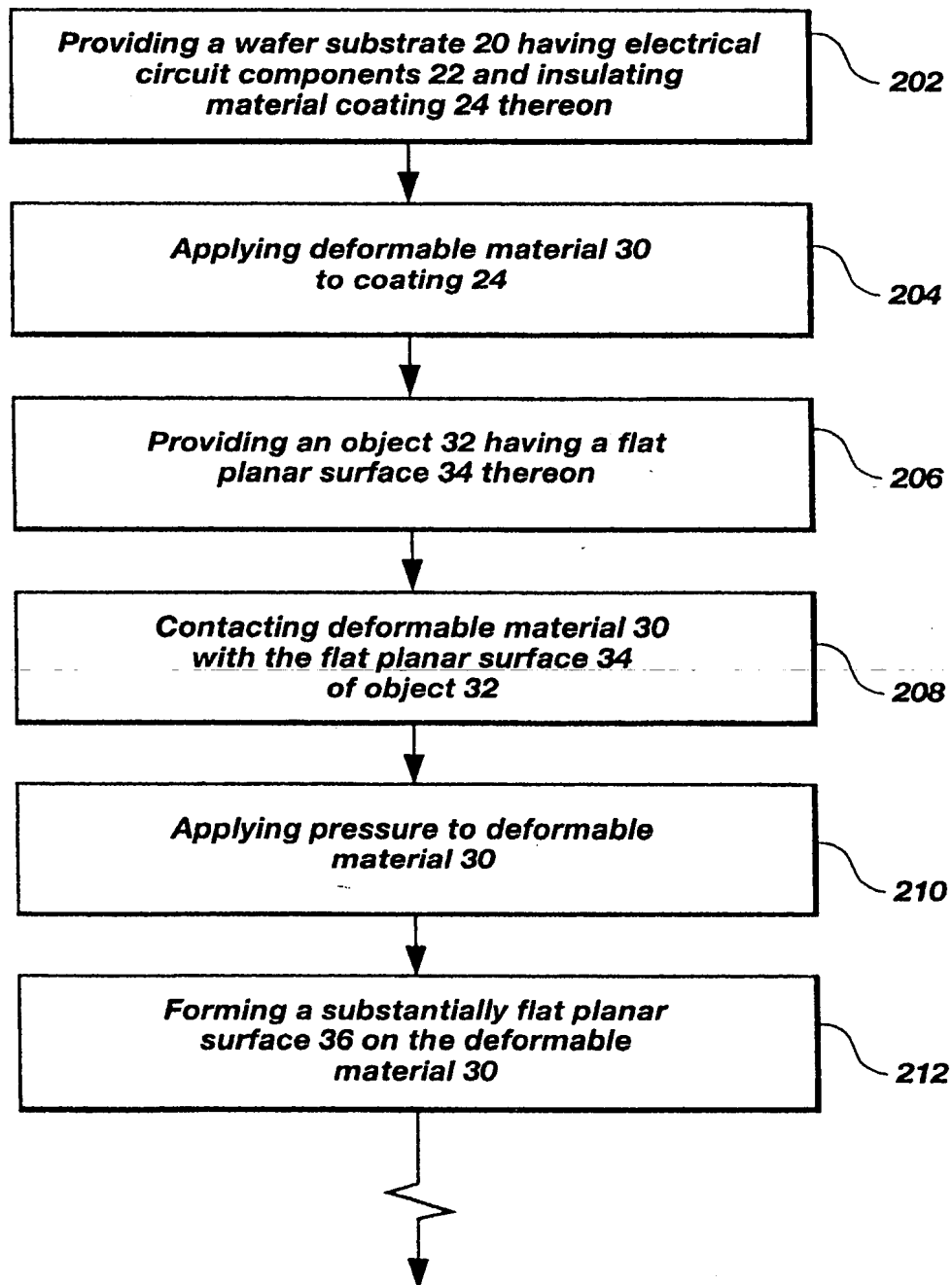


Fig. 7

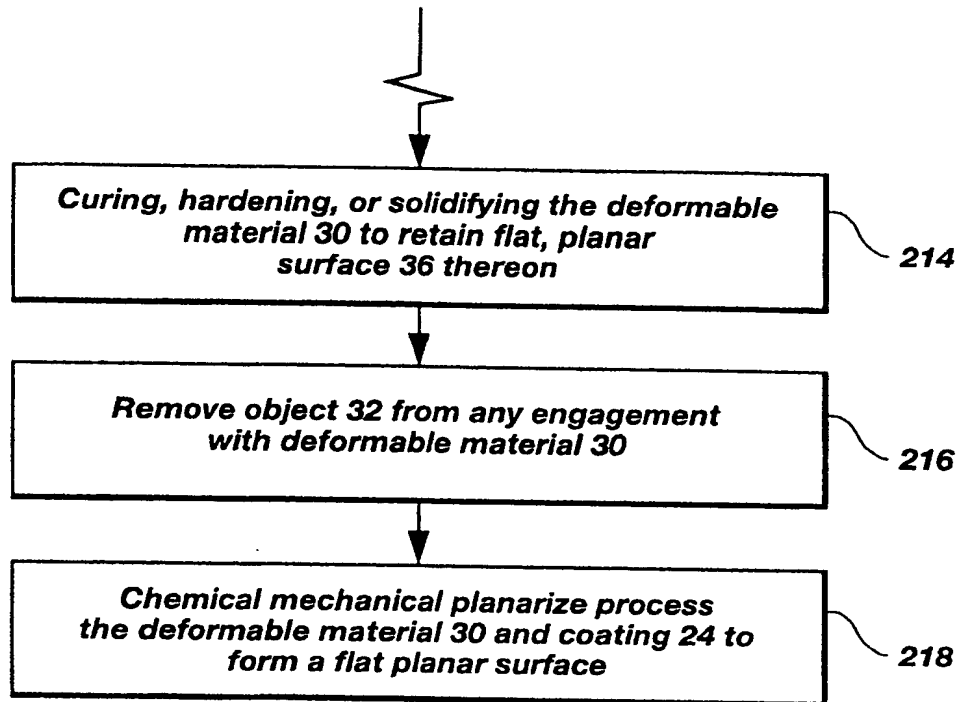
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**Fig. 8**

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**Fig. 9A**

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**Fig. 9B**

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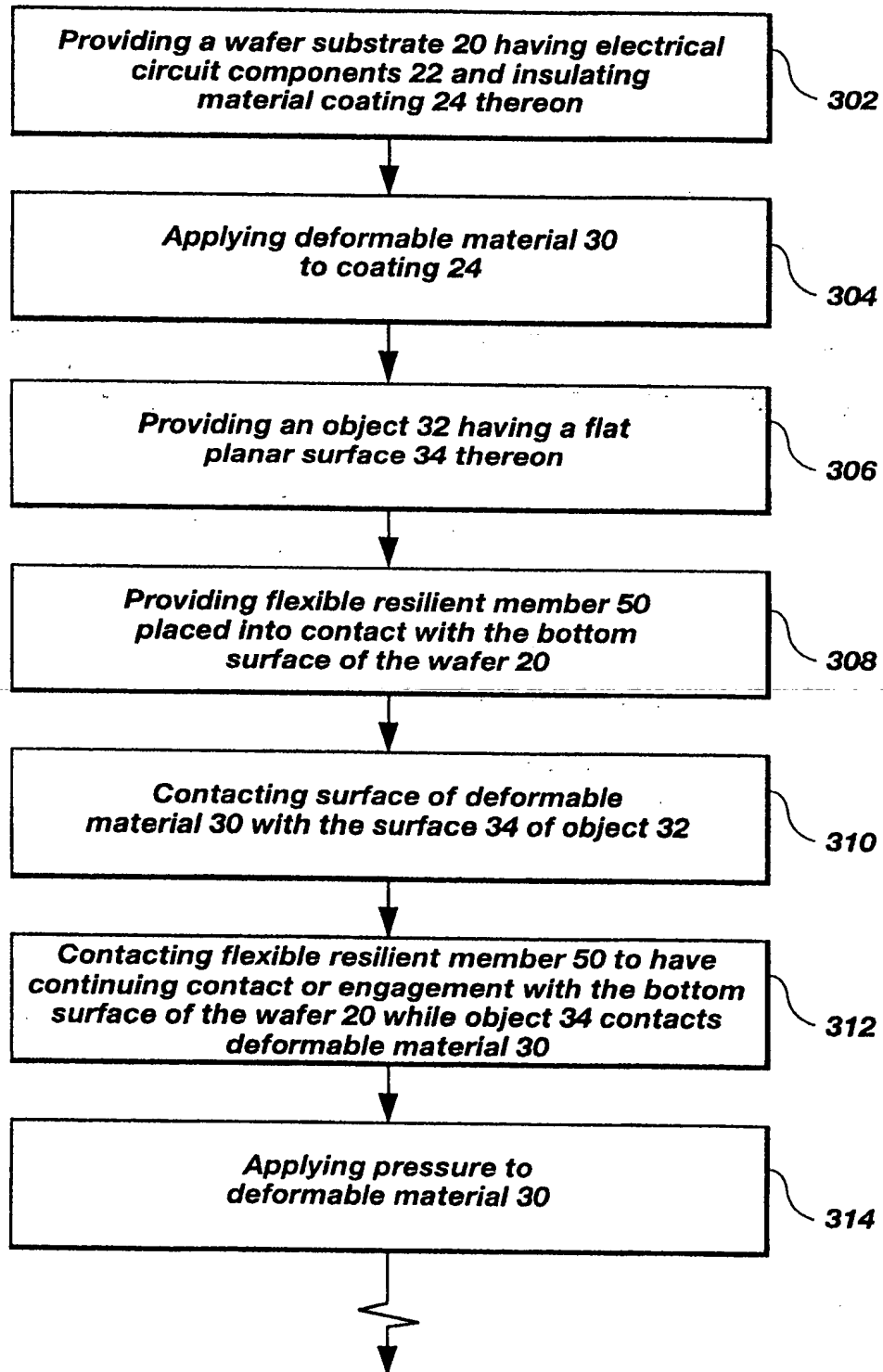
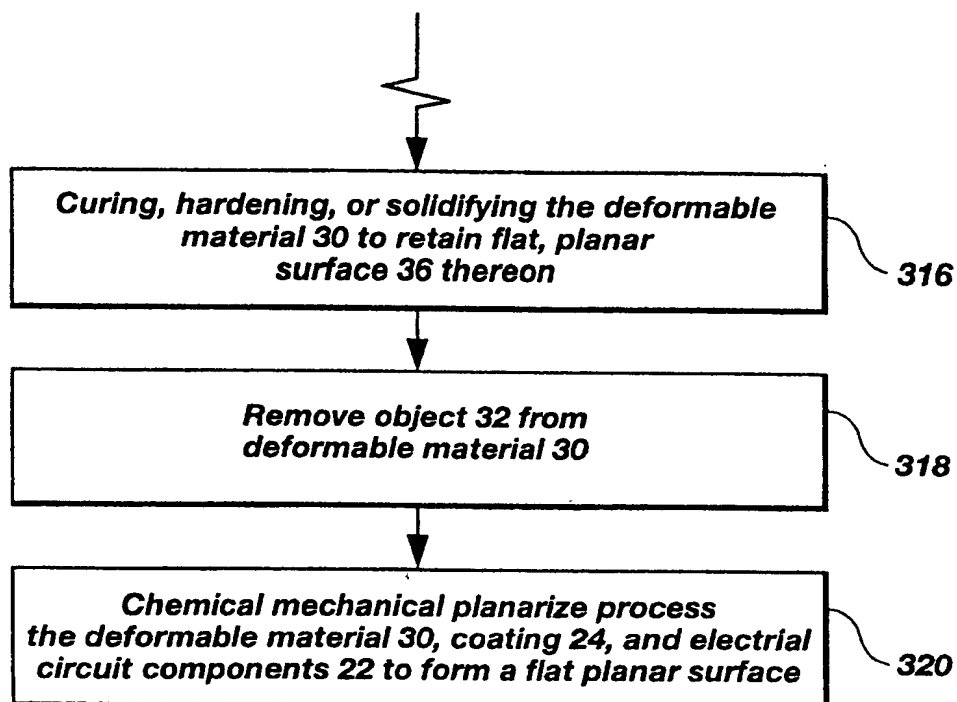


Fig. 10A

10/10

**Fig. 10B**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/10479

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : H01L 21/302; B05D 3/00, 12; H01B 13/00; B44C 1/22

US CL : Please See Extra Sheet.

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 438/692, 694, 697, 698, 705, 759, 760; 427/277, 278, 370;
216/13, 53, 54, 87, 88, 89, 89, 95, 96, 97

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

APS: USPAT; ORBIT: WPAT, JAPIO, INSPEC

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X,P --- Y,P	US, A 5,643,837 (HAYASHI) 01 July 1997, columns 2-11, Figs. 10-16, 20-25.	1-3, 7-10, 16, 22-30, 34-37, 41 44, 47, 50-56, 60-63, 68-70 ----- 17-21, 45- 46, 48-49, 74
A,P	US, A 5,679,610 (MATSUDA et. al.) 21 October 1997, columns 3-11, Figs. 1-4.	1-74
A	US, A 5,434,107 (PARANJPE) 18 July 1995, columns 2-7, Figs. 1-3.	1-74

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	*T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	*X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
B earlier document published on or after the international filing date	*Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	*A* document member of the same patent family
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search

17 AUGUST 1998

Date of mailing of the international search report

02 OCT 1998

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Authorized officer

B. Nauder
BENJAMIN UTECH

Telephone No. (703) 308-0661

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/10479

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US, A 5,736,424 (PRYBYLA et. al.) 07 April 1998, columns 2-8, Figs. 3, 4a-4b.	1-74

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet)(July 1992)★

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US98/10479

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER: US CL :

438/692, 697, 698, 705, 760; 427/277, 278, 370;
216/13, 53, 54, 87, 89

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